



Bradleys in the City

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No combat unit today knows where in the world it will next deploy for action, or into what kind of environment. Certainly, one possible environment is an urban one.

For that reason, we want to share some observations and lessons we learned when our mechanized infantry company, equipped with M2A2 Bradley fighting vehicles (BFVs), deployed to a military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) training area in Germany. Specifically, these observations include techniques for gaining an initial foothold in a city, moving tactically through a city, and establishing and securing a company-sized assembly area (AA) in a city.

The first obstacle encountered as the company began preparations for training was the scarcity of published information on using BFVs in an urban environment. Field Manual (FM) 90-10-1, *An Infantryman's Guide to Combat in Built-up Areas*, provides a starting point but does not cover the many problems and issues a unit faces in conducting such operations.

The techniques offered here evolved from training strategy sessions, practical exercises, and situational training exercises. They proved effective for a pure, BFV-equipped infantry company operating in a MOUT environment.

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ing buildings, which is essential in gaining the initial foothold. The BFV also provided for the rapid movement of assault troops from the assault position to the initial building while protecting them from small-arms fire.

Phase one of gaining a foothold involves a reconnaissance and a decision regarding which building best suits an initial assault.

Phase two includes the isolation, the suppression by fire of the foothold vicinity, and the initial assault (Figure 1).

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During this phase, each BFV is assigned a sector of fire where it is to suppress while a section of BFVs delivers the assault force to the building where the foothold is to be gained.

During phase three, the assault troops dismount and begin clearing the building (Figure 2). After the initial foothold is gained and adjacent buildings have been assaulted and cleared, the rest of the company can safely move forward to clear, seize, or secure the city, depending on its mission.

Once the company has gained the foothold, it must begin movement through the city. Two missions may now present themselves: Fight to secure the city, or secure the company as it moves through the city on its way to a subsequent objective. If the company is securing itself as it moves through—and if no contact is made before the unit enters the city—gaining an initial foothold may not be necessary.

The principle of making initial contact with the smallest element possible is as important in the city as it is in wooded terrain. With this in mind, the company developed, tested, and adopted a modified traveling overwatch technique. After the initial foothold was established, or upon entering the city, a combined team of dismounts and BFVs moved forward to confirm and establish a clear route through the city. In an attempt to avoid confusion, two distinct dismount elements were designated according to their functions: The forward security element (FSE), consisting of six dismounts, and the track security element (TSE), consisting of four dismounts.

The selection of weapons and the placement of the FSE were most effective when employed in the following manner: The two point weapons (M231s) initially provided both a rapid return and a high volume of fire. The next two weapons (M203s) provided the fire-

power of 40mm high-explosive as well as an indirect capability if needed. The final two weapons in the FSE (M249 light machineguns) provided a sustained high volume of fire as suppression for assault or withdrawal.

While moving along a route in this manner, three basic battle drills must be used: Contact front, contact rear, and contact flank. While all three closely resemble the *Actions on contact* and *React to near ambush* drills found in FM 7-7J, *The Mechanized Infantry Platoon and Squad*, Bradley, several issues unique to BFVs in the city are worth mentioning:

First, soldiers must keep in mind that the MOUT battlefield is three-dimensional. Contact can come as easily from above in an upper story window as from below in a sewer. No matter where it comes from, the contact will still fall into one of these battle drills.

Another important issue is the danger of firing armor-piercing discarding sabot (APDS-T) ammunition with friendly soldiers in front of the weapon system. The Bradley commander must ensure the safety of dismounts around his track before engaging with APDS-T.

The task organization of an FSE, a BFV section, and a TSE proved effective for our company. This concept allows for a battle handoff from the FSE to the BFV whenever contact is made. The FSE leader quickly assesses whether the firepower of the BFV will be necessary to suppress and destroy the enemy. If it is, he simply gives the vehicle commander a verbal picture of the situation by FM radio before the BFV moves. For example: *Red 2 this is Red 1, after turning the corner, 200 meters down the road, left side, blue building, third floor, corner window, machinegun nest.* This information is provided to reduce the amount of time the BFV needs to be exposed while the vehicle commander locates and destroys the enemy.

History teaches that any combat unit fighting in a city will almost certainly have to stay overnight at least once. The following techniques for securing a BFV-equipped infantry company inside a city have been practiced, tested with a practical exercise, and adopted.

The urban battlefield is complex, and

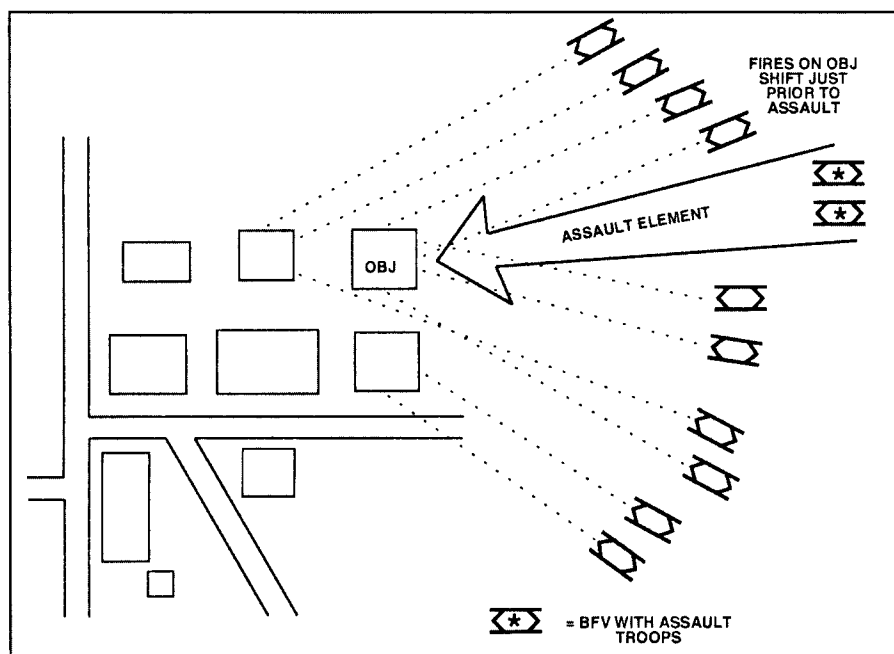


Figure 1. Isolating and suppressing buildings to gain a foothold.

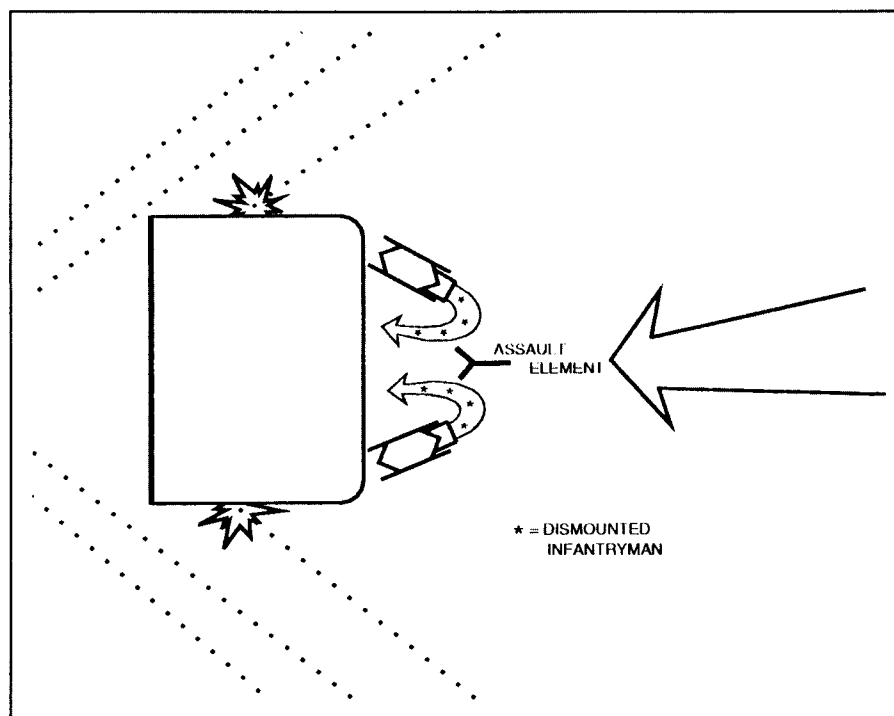


Figure 2. Assaulting the foothold using BFVs to deliver the assault element.

integrating BFVs into a defense that is based on buildings, streets, and alleys has proved complex as well. What evolved in our case was an assembly area and hasty defense that incorporated three platoon strong points quartered in buildings; BFVs covered the mounted avenues of approach while dismounts conducted security patrols. Because of the small num-

ber of mounted approach routes, many of the company's BFVs were secured in the perimeter, inside a building or under cover whenever possible. The security throughout the night consisted of patrols, dismounted observation posts (OPs) monitoring dismounted approaches, and mounted crews rotating through the BFVs designated to guard the mounted

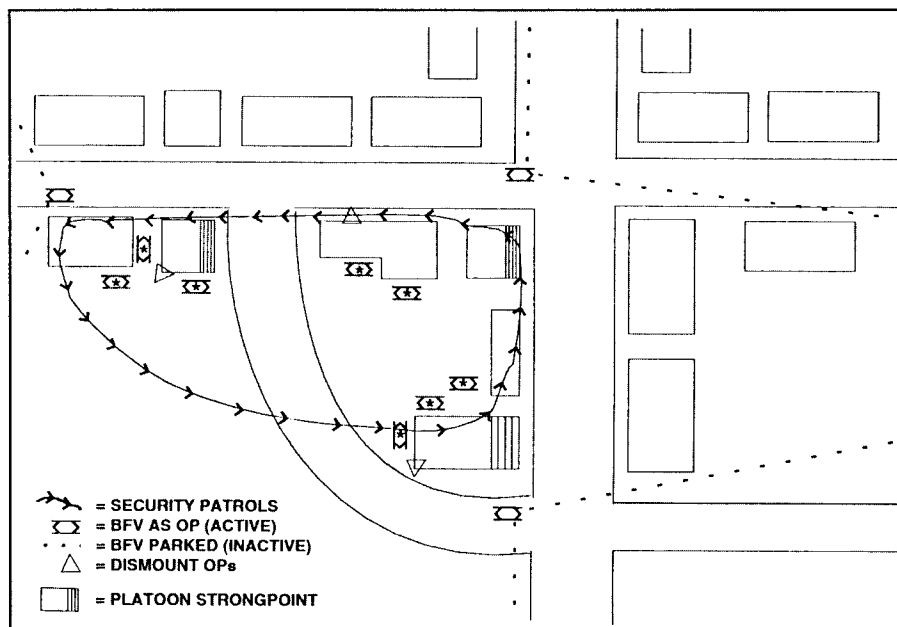


Figure 3. Securing an assembly area with BFVs and dismounts.

approach routes (Figure 3). The most difficult part of this entire operation was providing adequate security while also seeing that the soldiers received enough rest.

The mechanized infantry's change from M113s to BFVs has also changed

some of our capabilities; urban warfare requires a large pool of dismount strength that is not always feasible in a BFV-equipped company. The dramatic increase in firepower goes a long way toward compensating for the loss of dismount strength. Still, the nature of ur-

ban warfare requires a large number of dismounted infantrymen to enter, clear, and hold buildings. The constraints of the mechanized infantry tables of organization and equipment on the ability of a BFV-equipped company to fight effectively in an urban environment is an issue that must be carefully considered by commanders at all levels.

In a MOUT environment, the shock effect of the Bradley's M242 main gun, combined with the size and speed of the vehicle itself, are tools we cannot afford to use ineffectively. The key to using Bradleys in an urban environment is figuring out how to do it now and then practicing it before we have to use it in a real deployment.

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Mechanized Forces in MOUT

M113 Lessons from Operation *Just Cause*

CAPTAIN JAMES B. DANIELS

The increasing urbanization of our world—coupled with the instability in areas undergoing political change—and the reduction of the Army to a force of ten combat divisions demand that we prepare our mechanized infantry units to carry out a greater variety of missions. Military operations on urban terrain (MOUT) is one of those missions, and we must be able to do it right the first time, every time.

One of the first requirements is more flexibility on the part of our doctrine. For too long, we have taught, or at least implied, that MOUT is primarily for light infantry. Leaders of mechanized units must now think of MOUT as a realistic contingency for them and then train accordingly.

A look at some of the experiences of mechanized infantry in Operation *Just Cause* and the lessons learned will illus-

trate the utility of such units in urban combat.

The first mechanized infantry task force deployed from Fort Polk, Louisiana, to the Republic of Panama in early 1989 in response to President Manuel Noriega's annulment of democratic elections. That force was made up of two rifle companies, equipped with M113A2 armored personnel carriers, along with headquarters and headquarters company